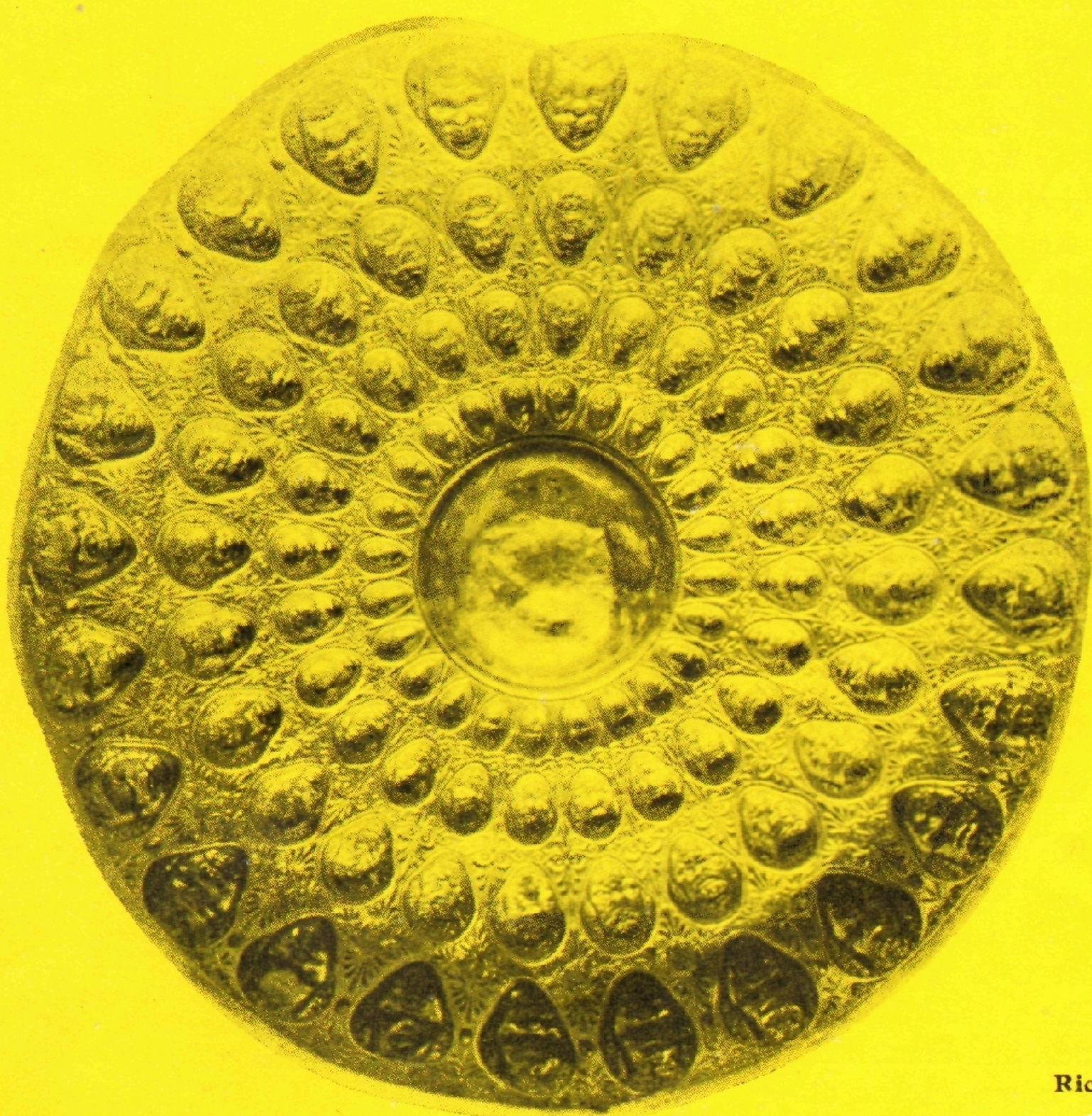




Wine jug

THE PANAGYU- RISHTE GOLD TREASURE

by DIMITER TSONCHEV



Richly ornamented phiale

Eleven years ago the archaeological world was interested to learn about a unique find made in the vicinity of Panagyurishtë in Bulgaria. The valuable Thracian gold treasure, which was then unearthed, still occupies the minds of many scholars throughout the world. In a number of countries it has been included in many text books as a model of the superb craftsmanship of ancient toreutic and goldsmith's work.

The treasure, which at present is displayed at the Archaeological Museum of Plovdiv, was discovered quite by accident in the remains of a poor Thracian settlement less than a mile to the south-east of the town of Panagyurishtë. As both history and archaeology tell us, the valley of Panagyurishtë was a busy centre in prehistoric, as well as in classical and more particularly in Greek days.

The treasure, which forms part of a gold drinking set, consists of nine vessels weighing 6.164 kg in all. These are: four rhyta, three oinochoae, one phiale and one amphora for the cooling of wine. The lower, front parts of the rhyta represent the heads of stags (2), of a young ram (1) and a he-goat's protome (1), with handles ending in lions (3). Each of the rhyta has a capacity of 350 grammes. Their upper parts or necks are adorned in relief with scenes from Greek mythology, including scenes from the Trojan War.

The three oinochoae are mugs shaped like women's heads, heads of amazons as some are inclined to think, with a late classical or early Hellenistic hairdress, with necklaces and handles ending in sphinxes at the top, and with a capacity of up to 0.5 litres. Below and in front of the necks they have a small lion's head with an open mouth through which the wine could flow out.

The phiale, drinking bowl and not a dish as some erroneously call it, has a hollow in the middle, making it easier to grip it. On the outside it is adorned with a row of 12 rosettes, a row of 24 acorns (a symbol of wealth in antiquity), three rows of 24 Negroes (Ethiopian) heads followed by exquisitely made palmettes and lotuses. Negroes' heads played the role of amulets in antiquity as a charm against evils and a magical attraction of the good. On the outside the weight (846.9 grammes) is given in drachmae and obols near the orifice.

The ninth vessel is an amphora weighing 1695.25 grammes, with a capacity of 1.5 l, without a stand underneath and with two handles ending in centaurs at the top. Its bottom is adorned with a rosette, two Negroes' heads with open mouths (holes from which the wine flowed out), with Heracles as an infant strangling two serpents and with a satyre. The scene depicted on the body is most probably a variant of the Greek myth of Achilles' discovery on the island of Scyros. The exquisite palace door, the unarmed oddly presented guard, the barefooted warriors attacking from without, and so on, clearly prove that this is not seven-gate Tiva. The absence of a stand beneath is a proof that the amphora was not used by itself but in a larger vessel, probably for the cooling of the wine during sumptuous banquets.

The manufacture of these vessels made of gold sheets passed through three stages: the larger parts were first embossed one by one, then welded with gold and chiselled to give them their final shape.

Because of its exquisite make and appearance, the treasure is considered as a late classical or early Greek piece of work of the highly developed art of toreutics and the goldsmith's craft dating back to the second half of the 4th century B. C. It is not a late Roman work of art, as some are inclined to assume. It was most probably made in a Greek workshop, more likely in Attica (Athens) than in Ionia or Ponta. All attempts definitely to establish the place of origin have failed so far so this is just a supposition.

It is quite probable that this valuable treasure, the only one of its kind in the world's museums to date, belonged to a Thracian king or an assistant of his, and was used in Thrace (present-day South Bulgaria); it was buried in haste when the population fled from the barbarian invasions from the lowlands to the mountains. It testified to the high standards of the art of the goldsmiths in antiquity and casts some light on the economic relations between the Greek centres to the north and the Thracians.



Rhyton



Rhyton



Amphora used to cool wine



AN ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT BIBLE IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

by KIRIL KRUSTEV

THE Bulgarian people are justified in deploring the fact that several old Bulgarian manuscripts were taken out of their country in bygone days. Today some of them figure in the collections of

world-renowned museums in London, the Vatican city, Moscow and elsewhere.

Some compensation for this incalculable loss, however, may exist in the unofficial diplomatic mission performed by these most valuable works of art, which so clearly demonstrate the early cultural advance of the Bulgarian people in the Middle Ages, an advance which was halted for many centuries by foreign invasions.

So we no longer hold it against the British collector and traveller Robert Curzon, who later became Lord Zouche, that in 1837 he asked for and was given as a present the MS of a Bulgarian bible, then housed in the Mount Athos monastery of St Pavel. After Curzon's death, the MS was added to the collections of the British Museum (Add 39627).

We feel perfectly justified, however, in asking that this remarkable example of old Bulgarian culture be no longer called the Curzon or London Bible, but the Bulgarian Bible of King Ivan Alexander.

Royal Portraits

There could be nothing more fitting than to identify this priceless heritage by the name of the illustrious historical figure with which it was originally identified so intimately. This name, and many portraits in the manuscript, convincingly support this claim. As you turn the first parchment page of the Bible, you see the amazingly beautiful miniatures of Ivan Alexander and his royal family — Queen Theodora, Prince Ivan Shishman, the heir to the throne, and Prince Mihail Assen.

Other members of the large royal family may also be found: the three daughters of Ivan Alexander and the husband of the eldest Despot Konstantin. All these figures, painted with the necessary decorum, are historical personages, whose stories hold the passions and tragic fates of Shakespearian heroes.

Ivan Alexander (1341-1371) was the last of the great kings of medieval Bulgaria, a protector of the arts and promoter of a lively trade with the West. He greatly encouraged building in his country and his reign is considered the second Golden Age of Bulgarian culture after the days of King Simeon.

In the miniature he is dressed in a tight red tunic, embroidered with imperial gold eagles. The end of the gold *laurion* which is draped around his waist is thrown over his left arm; its other side which is in the shade is painted in a blueish-violet tone. This is an example of the first known use of impressionistic blueish-

violet shadows in the history of art.

There are four other portraits of Ivan Alexander in this book: in the finished miniatures of each of the four gospels, together with the respective gossellers and in the large composition of the Last Judgement, where he stands at the bottom of the lowest stair with the sinners.

Divided Kingdom

What is the reason for this? The epoch-making ruler whose name is associated with the development of his country's economy and its medieval art, was a passionate and emotional person. Following the dictates of his heart, he placed on the throne a beautiful and rich Jewish girl, and because of his great love for her, he neglected the rightful heir to the throne, who is not included in the family portrait gallery of the manuscript.

By this action, he divided his kingdom and doomed it to perdition. This is described in its full dramatic impact in the plays by the Bulgarian writers Ivan Vazov and Kamen Zidarov.

The fates of all the others are focussed around this knot of passion and family division. Prince Mihail Assen perished early in a battle with the Ottoman invader, and was followed by Ivan Shishman, the last of the Abencerages of the great Bulgarian state. His sister, Kera Tamara, who divorced Despot Konstantin, was offered as a sacrifice for the sake of the perishing Bulgarian Kingdom to the conqueror Sultan Murad I.

The third daughter, Keratsa Maria, became a Byzantine empress, wife of Andronicus Paleologus. Despot Konstantin, Ivan Alexander's son-in-law, ruled the Kyustendil principality from 1355 to 1394; his daughter also became a Byzantine empress, wife of Manuil Paleologus.

Had the medieval Bulgarian artist painted only these portraits we would be for ever in his debt. The fact that he left us so much information about Bulgarian and Byzantine court dress of the period adds further significance to his remarkable miniatures. His portraits of Ivan Shishman, rendered so realistically in spite of the strict canons of Byzantine iconography, is an indication of his great artistic gift.

Beautiful Decorations

At the request of this remarkable Bulgarian ruler, Monk Simon translated from the Greek, wrote and probably illuminated this bible in 1356. It has 286 parchment pages,

33 x 24.3 cm in size, and is written in beautiful, large official script with red and gold illuminated initials. The text is well-proportioned, the spacing of the letters being based according to the Golden Rule in the ratio of 5:7.

Besides the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, it also contains a two-page epilogue by the scribe, in which art terms are used for the first time in Bulgarian literature, an exlibris page containing the inscription 'Bible of Ivan Alexander,' and seven pages of calendar additions, containing details of the lives of the saints. There is a square illumination at the head of every gospel, the rich ornamentation of which details the figures of the gossellers and their celestial inspirers.

There are 366 miniature illuminations, 4-5 cm high, forming an inseparable part of the decoration of the whole work as they appear in the margin and intervals of the text. They illustrate biblical scenes, from the genealogy and birth of Christ to his death and especially deal with his teachings and his curing of the sick. They are vivid genre miniatures, of a fine and supple draftsmanship and with a lovely colour scheme.

Painted against a blue or green background, they are decorated with flowers, palms and cypress trees. The lakes and seas are presented as large tubs shown from a bird's eye view and the citadels and towers are painted in reverse perspective. Within the framework of this formal presentation, the draftsmanship is skilful, and serves its purpose in a most expressive way.

The many figures and the several scenes which are repeated in the four gospels are cleverly varied. The artist has skilfully drawn his galloping horses. The colours are generally intense: red, blue, green, brown and violet, relieved by some lighter hues of orange, yellow, azure, rose and pale violet. Flashes of gold in the haloes and crowns, and occasionally on armour and rich mantles, add the customary brilliance to these illuminations.

Treasures on Earth

The miniatures in the Bible of Ivan Alexander are to some extent similar to those in the other known illuminated Bulgarian manuscripts of the same period: the Bibles in Elisavetgrad in Russia and Sucevica in Rumania, as well as the famous Bulgarian copy of the Chronicle of Manasses in the Vatican Library¹.

These, with other illustrated books

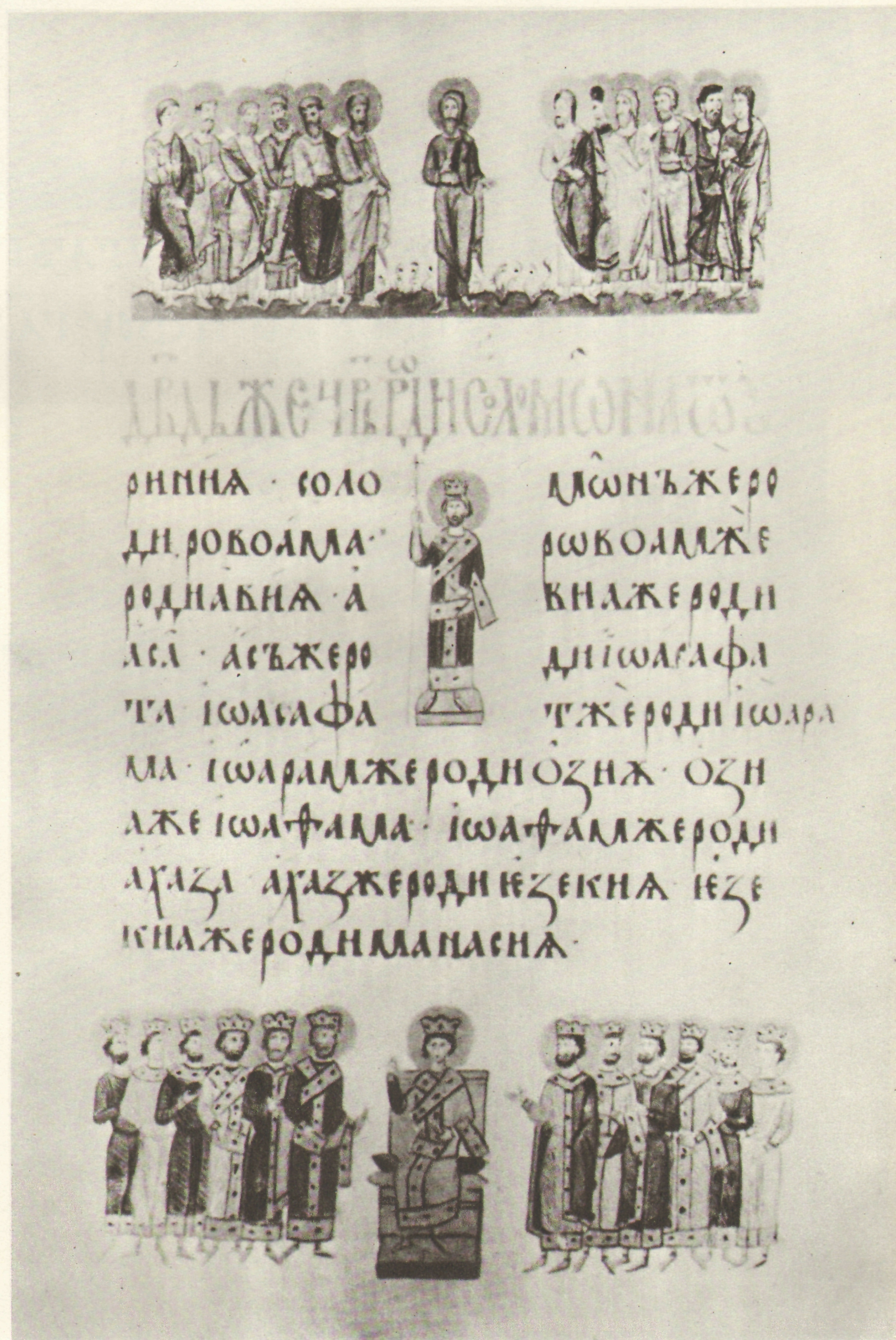
found in Sofia and the provinces, as well as abroad, testify to the flowering of the Turnovoschool of illumination from the 12th to the 14th century.

According to Monk Simon's note in the epilogue, the Bible of Ivan Alexander was bound in red leather with gold relief plates decorated with precious stones.

Today only the leather over the

boards, with the heraldic ornaments and the rifled settings for the attachment of the precious decorations speak of the high level of the goldsmith's and other decorative arts and crafts which accompanied the cultural and artistic flowering of the period of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, carrying as it did all the characteristics of an early Renaissance.

Facsimile of the Four Gospels of Ivan Alexander (above) King Judas and his brethren; (centre) King David; (below) King Solomon and his suite



¹) See *Bulgaria Today* No 11, 1962

ТЕМЬ ОУНДОШЖВЪСТРАНЖ
СВОЖ:



ШЕДШЕЛЖЕНАМЪ, СЕАГЛАЪГНЬ
ВЪСТНѢАВНЕСА ІОЕН ФОРУ ГАА ВЪ

КАШААТЬ НЖІЗБРАННЫХЪ РАДНАЖЕН
ЗБРАПРЪКРАТНАДНН



Н ТОГДААЩЕ КТОРѢТЪ СЕЕ ДУХЪ СЕО ВЪ ДЕНІА
ТЕКЪРЫ КЪСТАНАЖТЪ БОЛЖИИХРИСТИ

▲ The Nativity: The angel tells the shepherds of the Nativity: the coming of the Magi

◀ Jesus Christ prophesies the sufferings which await his disciples, and the wars which will turn the world into a desert

► Tsar Ivan Alexander, his second Queen Theodora, and their sons Ivan Shishman and Mihail Assen

† ФѢОДОРЪ ХАКАВѢРНАА
 ННОВСКОЕ ПРѢСВѢЩЕННАА
 ЦРЦА НСАМОДРЪЖИЦА
 КЪРѢДѢ

БЛЖГАРША
 НГРЪКОМА

† ІОАНЪ АЛЕХАНДРЪ
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НСАМОДРЪЖЕЦЪ
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ІОШНШАА
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 ВЕЛИКАЦРЪ ІО

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